(d) whether there is any proposal to conduct written test in regional language, Kannad, for aspirants from Karnataka; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to conduct crash course for army aspirants in Karnataka?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The number of recruitment rallies held in Karnataka for recruitment in the Army, was 18 in 2003-2004 and 15 in 2004-2005.

(b) The total number of candidates who appeared for the physical fitness test and the written test were 27596 and 5445 respectively in 2003-2004 and 19605 and 4452 respectively in 2004-2005. The question papers for the written test include General Knowledge, General Science and Mathematics. There is no separate English language test.

(c) The percentage of candidates who had got through the physical fitness test but could not pass in the written test was 28.72% in 2003-2004 and 60.73% in 2004-2005.

(d) As per existing policy, question papers are set in English and Hindi only and are of elementary standard, where a candidate with an average knowledge can pass. In addition, the questions during the examination are explained to the candidates in the regional languages by employing teachers proficient in the local language and candidates are allowed additional time for this purpose where necessary.

(e) No such course is proposed at present.

Participation In Youth Exchange Programme In Singapore

2387. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRASEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a delegation of the air and naval wings of the National Cadet Corps have participated in a two-week "Youth Exchange Programme" in Singapore recently;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the expenditure incurred by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A delegation visited Singapore from 29th May to 11th June, 2005. The Navel wing consisted of one Naval NCC officer and six NCC cadets and the Air Wing comprised of one Air Force NCC officer and four NCC cadets.

(c) The total expenditure incurred was Rs. 5,09,312/-.

Exemption of Ex-servicemen for contribution to ECHS

2388. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that war-disabled Ex-servicemen have been exempted from payment of contribution to the Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme;

(b) if so, whether Government had issued guidelines to the concerned authorities in this regard;

(c) if so, whether Government had also accorded such status to the pensioners of the Ex-servicemen; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI B.K.HANDIQUE):(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) There is no exemption from payment of contribution to ECHS to the Ex-servicemen persioners because the scheme is a contributory one.

Kelkar Committee recommendations on defence production

2389. DR. VIJAY MALLYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be plessed to state:

(a) whether the Kelkar Committee has submitted its recommendations to Government;

(b) what are the important suggestions made by the Committee to allow private sector firms for production of strategic weapons system and to produce new materials; and